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# Fast multiple inversion for stress analysis from fault-slip data

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## Abstract

The multiple inverse method is widely used to invert multiple stress tensors from fault-slip data caused by polyphase tectonics. A practical problem of the method is the time-consuming computation related to its iterative procedure. This paper describes a way of accelerating the computation by replacing an exhaustive grid search for the optimal stress tensor by direct calculation using an analytical solution. Furthermore, a technique to reduce noise in the result was developed based on the estimation of instabilities of solutions.

*Keywords:* stress tensor inversion, tectonic stress, algorithm, even-determined problem, deviatoric stress space

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## 1. Introduction

Stress tensor inversion methods are widely used to infer tectonic stress state from fault-slip data. Input fault data are collected from geological outcrops, seismic focal mechanisms, rock core samples and underground images obtained by three-dimensional seismic surveys. Among the variety of meth-

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6 ods the multiple inverse method (Yamaji, 2000), hereafter abbreviated as  
7 MIM, has an advantage in separating multiple stress tensors from a mix-  
8 ture of geological faults yielded from spatial or temporal change of tectonic  
9 stress state. This method has been used by many researchers in various  
10 regions (e.g., Yamada and Yamaji, 2002; Yamaji, 2003; Sippel et al., 2009;  
11 Chan et al., 2010) and further methodological improvement is now ongoing.  
12 MIM has been extended to analyse seismic focal mechanisms without a pri-  
13 ori specification of fault planes from paired orthogonal nodal planes (Otsubo  
14 et al., 2008), improved to objectively recognise multiple solutions by means of  
15 clustering techniques (Otsubo and Yamaji, 2006) and enhanced in its resolu-  
16 tion through development of uniform computational grid (Sato and Yamaji,  
17 2006b; Yamaji and Sato, 2011).

18 A fault-slip data set is described as heterogeneous when it includes faults  
19 caused by different stresses. A conventional method of stress inversion (e.g.,  
20 Angelier, 1979) determines an optimal stress tensor for a whole data set,  
21 though the solution is meaningless if the data set is heterogeneous. MIM  
22 can detect multiple stress tensors through an iterative sampling procedure.  
23 When a data set has  $N$  faults, MIM extracts a subset including  $k$  faults from  
24 it and determines an optimal stress tensor for the subset by exhaustive grid  
25 search. This process is repeated  ${}_NC_k$  times for all possible combinations of  
26  $k$ -element subsets. A great number of stress tensors are obtained and their  
27 concentrations are interpreted as desired tectonic stresses (Fig. 1). This  
28 iterative calculation also has an effect of enhancing solutions from natural  
29 noisy fault-slip data.

30 A problem of MIM lies in its computational cost. It takes between a few

hours and several days to analyse several hundred to a thousand faults by a personal computer. The cost is proportional to the number of fault subsets  ${}_N C_k$ , which is order of  $O(N^k)$  by Landau's symbol. The number of faults in a subset  $k$  is empirically set to four or five (Yamaji, 2000). Therefore the cost is  $O(N^4)$  or  $O(N^5)$ . This fact generally limits the total number of faults  $N$  up to a thousand.

Each determination of optimal stress for fault subsets is done by exhaustive grid search on 60,000 uniformly spaced stress tensors (Sato and Yamaji, 2006b) by default. This study proposes a direct algorithm for determination of optimal stress tensor. Although the new technique is applicable only to four-element subsets, it calculates the numerous stress solutions several times faster than conventional MIM. A method of noise reduction by estimating instabilities of solutions is also provided.

## 2. Method

### 2.1. Wallace-Bott hypothesis

MIM as well as recent stress tensor inversion techniques is based on an assumption that a fault slips in the direction of shear stress, which is called Wallace-Bott hypothesis (Wallace, 1951; Bott, 1959, illustrated in Fig. 2a). Input data of stress inversion analysis are called fault-slip data which contain fault plane orientations, slip orientations and shear senses, while the unknown parameters are described by stress tensors. The direction of shear stress on a fault plane depends on four of the six independent components of stress tensor. Let  $\sigma$ , whose components are denoted by  $\sigma_{ij}$  ( $i = 1$  to 3,  $j = 1$  to 3), be a reduced stress tensor with four degrees of freedom. Two normalisation

conditions imposed on  $\boldsymbol{\sigma}$  can be freely chosen. The first and second invariants  
are normalised in this study, i.e.,

$$J_1 = \sigma_1 + \sigma_2 + \sigma_3 = 0 \quad (1)$$

and

$$J_2 = -\sigma_1\sigma_2 - \sigma_2\sigma_3 - \sigma_3\sigma_1 = 1, \quad (2)$$

where  $\sigma_1$ ,  $\sigma_2$  and  $\sigma_3$  are the principal stress magnitudes ( $\sigma_1 \geq \sigma_2 \geq \sigma_3$ ,  
compression is positive). Let  $\mathbf{n} = (n_1, n_2, n_3)^T$  and  $\mathbf{v} = (v_1, v_2, v_3)^T$  be the  
unit vectors in the directions of fault normal and slip direction, respectively.  
The superscript T denotes the transpose of a vector or a matrix. Hereafter  
all vectors are column vectors. Cauchy's formula gives the traction vector  
exerted on a fault plane by a stress as  $\mathbf{t} = \boldsymbol{\sigma}\mathbf{n}$ . The shear stress is derived by  
projecting  $\mathbf{t}$  onto fault plane as  $\boldsymbol{\tau} = \mathbf{t} - \mathbf{n}\mathbf{n}^T\mathbf{t}$ . The Wallace-Bott hypothesis  
requires  $\boldsymbol{\tau}$  to be in the same direction as  $\mathbf{v}$ .

Fry (1999) decomposed the Wallace-Bott condition into

$$\mathbf{b} \cdot \mathbf{t} = 0 \quad (3)$$

and

$$\mathbf{v} \cdot \mathbf{t} > 0, \quad (4)$$

where the unit vector  $\mathbf{b} = \mathbf{n} \times \mathbf{v}$  is perpendicular to both  $\mathbf{n}$  and  $\mathbf{v}$ . Eq. (3)  
requires the shear stress vector  $\boldsymbol{\tau}$  to be parallel to observed slip direction  $\mathbf{v}$ ,  
while Eq. (4) represents the correspondence of shear sense (Fig. 2a). Sato  
and Yamaji (2006a) introduced the deviatoric stress space to stress inversion  
analysis, in which reduced stress tensors and fault-slip data are represented

by five-dimensional unit vectors (Fig. 2b). They reformulated Eqs. (3) and (4) as

$$\vec{\epsilon}' \cdot \vec{\sigma} = 0 \quad (5)$$

and

$$\vec{\epsilon} \cdot \vec{\sigma} > 0, \quad (6)$$

respectively. The vectors in Eqs. (5) and (6) are defined as

$$\vec{\sigma} = \begin{pmatrix} \sigma_{11}/\sqrt{2} \\ \sigma_{22}/\sqrt{2} \\ \sigma_{33}/\sqrt{2} \\ \sigma_{23} \\ \sigma_{31} \\ \sigma_{12} \end{pmatrix}, \quad \vec{\epsilon}' = \begin{pmatrix} \sqrt{2}b_1n_1 \\ \sqrt{2}b_2n_2 \\ \sqrt{2}b_2n_2 \\ b_2n_3 + b_3n_2 \\ b_3n_1 + b_1n_3 \\ b_1n_2 + b_2n_1 \end{pmatrix}, \quad \vec{\epsilon} = \begin{pmatrix} \sqrt{2}v_1n_1 \\ \sqrt{2}v_2n_2 \\ \sqrt{2}v_2n_2 \\ v_2n_3 + v_3n_2 \\ v_3n_1 + v_1n_3 \\ v_1n_2 + v_2n_1 \end{pmatrix}. \quad (7)$$

The normalisation conditions of the stress tensor (Eqs. 1 and 2) and the orthogonality of unit vectors representing fault parameters (Fig. 2a) imply

$$\sigma_{11} + \sigma_{22} + \sigma_{33} = \epsilon'_1 + \epsilon'_2 + \epsilon'_3 = \epsilon_1 + \epsilon_2 + \epsilon_3 = 0, \quad (8)$$

$$|\vec{\sigma}| = |\vec{\epsilon}'| = |\vec{\epsilon}| = 1, \quad (9)$$

and

$$\vec{\epsilon}' \cdot \vec{\epsilon} = 0. \quad (10)$$

Eq. (8) means the components of vectors in the direction of  $(1, 1, 1, 0, 0, 0)^T$  are equal to 0, which allows us to reduce the dimension on six-dimensional vectors to five. According to Eq. (9) the end points of vectors are on the five-dimensional unit sphere (Fig. 2b).

85 The Wallace-Bott condition is geometrically expressed in the deviatoric  
86 stress space (Sato and Yamaji, 2006a). A fault-slip datum specifies paired  
87 orthogonal vectors  $\vec{\epsilon}'$  and  $\vec{\epsilon}$  (Eq. 10). The unknown stress tensor is con-  
88 strained so that  $\vec{\sigma}$  is perpendicular to  $\vec{\epsilon}'$  and is in the same hemisphere as  
89  $\vec{\epsilon}$  (Eqs. 5 and 6). In other words, stress tensors which satisfy the Wallace-  
90 Bott condition correspond to  $\vec{\sigma}$  on a half great circle specified by  $\vec{\epsilon}'$  and  $\vec{\epsilon}$   
91 (Fig. 2b), which is called the Fry arc in what follows.

## 92 2.2. Analytical solution

93 When we have a number of faults activated by a single stress, their Fry  
94 arcs should intersect at a point on the five-dimensional unit sphere. The point  
95 corresponds to the optimal stress tensor satisfying Wallace-Bott conditions  
96 for all faults. Since natural data contain errors to some extent, intersections  
97 of Fry arcs do not generally coincide. MIM searches for optimal points for  
98 fault subsets which have small distances to Fry arcs. The candidates of  
99 solutions are the uniformly spaced 60,000 grid points (Sato and Yamaji,  
100 2006b). The exhaustive search on the grid causes the computational cost.

101 The necessary and sufficient number of fault data to determine a stress  
102 solution is four, which is equal to the number of unknown stress parame-  
103 ters. This fact corresponds to the geometry in the deviatoric stress space.  
104 In order to satisfy the parallel conditions between shear stress vectors and  
105 slip directions (Eq. 5) for four faults, a direction perpendicular to four  $\vec{\epsilon}'$   
106 vectors in the five-dimensional space is uniquely specified by calculating a  
107 cross product of them (Fig. 3). Fortunately, the number of faults in a subset  
108 of MIM analysis can be set to four. Then the time-consuming grid search  
109 can be replaced by a direct calculation of cross product. The replacement

110 is expected to save computational time, although the shear sense conditions  
111 (Eq. 6) must be checked separately.

### 112 2.3. Procedure

113 The present method of fast multiple inversion, hereafter FMI, takes the  
114 following steps.

- 115 1. Convert  $N$  fault-slip data into  $\vec{\epsilon}$  and  $\vec{\epsilon}'$  vectors.
- 116 2. Extract a four-element subset from the whole data.
- 117 3. Calculate the five-dimensional cross product of four  $\vec{\epsilon}'$  vectors to ob-  
118 tain a candidate  $\vec{\sigma}$  for the optimal solution.
- 119 4. Check the shear sense conditions (Eq. 6) by calculating dot products  
120 of  $\vec{\sigma}$  and  $\vec{\epsilon}$  vectors. If all signs of four dot products are positive or  
121 negative,  $\vec{\sigma}$  or  $-\vec{\sigma}$  is the optimal solution for the subset, respectively.  
122 Otherwise, reject the candidate  $\vec{\sigma}$  and proceed to 6.
- 123 5. Find the nearest grid point to the optimal solution from 60,000 uniform  
124 grid points and cast a vote for the corresponding stress tensor.
- 125 6. Repeat procedures 2 to 5  ${}_NC_4$  times for all possible combinations of  
126 fault subsets.

127 The software of FMI is available at the author's web site ([http://www.kueps.kyoto-](http://www.kueps.kyoto-u.ac.jp/~web-bs/k_sato/software.html)  
128 [u.ac.jp/~web-bs/k\\_sato/software.html](http://www.kueps.kyoto-u.ac.jp/~web-bs/k_sato/software.html)).

129 Step 5 above is necessary to deal with numerous stress tensors. When  
130  $N = 100$ , for example, we need to find concentrations of  ${}_{100}C_4 = 3,921,225$   
131 solutions, though step 4 probably reduces the number to some extent. The  
132 population of solutions are converted into votes for grid points. The peaks



of distribution of votes on the five-dimensional unit sphere can be visualised and recognised by viewer software.

Noisy votes in the result of MIM analysis partly comes from heterogeneous fault subsets, for which the optimal solutions are meaningless and expected to be random stress tensors (Yamaji, 2000). Otsubo and Yamaji (2006) proposed a method to reduce such noise by excluding a candidate solution if the distance between corresponding  $\vec{\sigma}$  vector and at least one Fry arc is larger than a threshold value. In the present method of FMI step 4 performs the exclusion during the check of shear sense conditions.

Another type of noise can arise from the instability of cross product calculated in step 3. If four  $\vec{\epsilon}'$  vectors are not sufficiently linearly independent, i.e., at least two of them are nearly parallel, the direction of their cross product becomes instable. The degree of linear independence is measured by the length of the cross product, which is the volume of four-dimensional parallelepiped spanned by  $\vec{\epsilon}'$  vectors. The length ranges from 0 to 1. For the purpose of reducing noisy votes, FMI has an option to weight votes proportionally to the lengths of cross products in the procedure 5.

### 3. Improvement

#### 3.1. Test 1: Reduction of calculation time

Artificial fault-slip data sets were analysed to compare the calculation times of MIM and FMI. The number of faults in a subset  $k$  in MIM was set to four. An example of a data set is shown in Fig. 4a. Fault planes are randomly oriented. A half of the faults in a data set is assumed to be activated by stress A with  $\sigma_1$ -axis at 000/00,  $\sigma_3$ -axis at 090/00 and  $\Phi = 0.3$ .

157 The other half corresponds to stress B with  $\sigma_1$ -axis at 040/00,  $\sigma_3$ -axis at  
158 130/00 and  $\Phi = 0.3$ . The parameter  $\Phi = (\sigma_2 - \sigma_3) / (\sigma_1 - \sigma_3)$  is called stress  
159 ratio, which ranges from 0 to 1.  $\Phi = 0$  for axial compression ( $\sigma_1 > \sigma_2 = \sigma_3$ )  
160 and  $\Phi = 1$  for axial tension ( $\sigma_1 = \sigma_2 > \sigma_3$ ).

161 As the result of MIM and FMI analyses, the artificial stresses A and B  
162 were successfully detected (Fig. 4b and c). No large difference was found  
163 between results of MIM with grid search and FMI with direct calculation  
164 as is expected. The time spent for calculation is shown in Fig. 5a for the  
165 cases of  $N = 50$  to 500. Although the calculation time rapidly increases with  
166 the number of data for both methods, FMI was found to be about ten times  
167 faster than MIM.

168 The calculation time for analysis of seismic focal mechanisms was also  
169 examined (Fig. 5b). For a four-element subset, the number of possible  
170 choices between orthogonal nodal planes is  $2^4 = 16$ . All choices are regarded  
171 as different subsets of faults in both MIM and FMI, of which calculation  
172 inevitably requires much longer time than analysis of geological fault data.  
173 Fig. 5b clearly shows that FMI is several times faster than MIM.

### 174 3.2. Test 2: Noise reduction

175 As is mentioned in Section 2.3, FMI has an option to reduce noisy so-  
176 lutions by weighting them according to the lengths of five-dimensional cross  
177 products. This option can reduce noises caused by nearly parallel  $\vec{\epsilon}'$  vectors  
178 which correspond to nearly parallel fault planes and slip directions. In order  
179 to test the effect of noise reduction, an artificial fault data set with 100 faults  
180 were analysed (Fig. 6). The faults were assumed to be activated by a single  
181 stress tensor with stress ratio  $\Phi$  of 0.3 and with  $\sigma_1$ - and  $\sigma_3$ -axes oriented

182 340/10 and 160/80, respectively. The normals of fault planes were concen-  
183 trated at 000/45 and 180/45 with some perturbation, simulating a conjugate  
184 fault system.

185 As the results of MIM (Fig. 6b), FMI (Fig. 6c) and FMI with noise  
186 reduction (Fig. 6d), the assumed stress tensor was successfully detected.  
187 The difference between methods appeared in the accuracy and precision of  
188 solution. The accuracy can be measured by angular stress distance  $\Theta$  (Yamaji  
189 and Sato, 2006), which is the reformulation of stress difference proposed by  
190 Orife and Lisle (2003), between optimal solutions and the assumed stress  
191 tensor. MIM resulted in  $\Theta = 5.38^\circ$ , while FMI with noise reduction had a  
192 higher accuracy of  $\Theta = 1.61^\circ$ . The precision was measured by the dispersion  
193 of numerous solutions derived from all fault subsets, which can be estimated  
194 by the mean distance  $\bar{\Theta}$  to the optimal (averaged) solution. FMI with noise  
195 reduction was found to have higher precision of  $\bar{\Theta} = 15.6^\circ$  than that of MIM,  
196  $\bar{\Theta} = 22.7^\circ$ . The weighting of solutions by the lengths of cross products was  
197 confirmed to be effective in reducing noise.

#### 198 4. Discussion

199 The new method of multiple stress inversion (FMI) was found to accel-  
200 erate the calculation by a factor of up to 10 without loss of detectability of  
201 stress tensors. Moreover, the noise reduction technique is available in FMI  
202 analysis. However, the dependence of calculation amount of FMI on the  
203 number of fault data is still  $O(N^4)$ , the same as MIM, as is demonstrated by  
204 the rapidly increasing trends of calculation time in Fig. 5. It will take several  
205 days to analyse more than a thousand faults by using personal computers.

206 The problem is severe especially for seismic focal mechanisms because of the  
207 availability of databases accumulating numerous seismic events and the un-  
208 known choice between nodal planes. Further reduction of calculation time  
209 could be achieved by relaxing the requirement of analysing all possible com-  
210 binations of fault subsets. We could undertake random sampling of fault  
211 subsets to limit the computation effort, which of course requires a careful  
212 assessment of degeneration of results.

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264 **Figure captions**265 *Figure 1*

266 Schematic figure illustrating the procedure of multiple inverse method  
267 (MIM) to detect multiple stress tensors from a heterogeneous fault-slip data  
268 set. The data set is a mixture of black and white  $f$  symbols representing faults  
269 activated by different stresses A and B, respectively. MIM extracts subsets  
270 of four or five faults from whole data and determines optimal solutions for  
271 them by means of exhaustive grid search on the deviatoric stress space (Sato  
272 and Yamaji, 2006b) which is geometrically the surface of five-dimensional  
273 unit sphere. Homogeneous subsets are expected to concentrate their votes  
274 to the grid points corresponding to stresses A or B, while the meaningless  
275 solutions from heterogeneous subsets should be placed randomly.

276 *Figure 2*

277 Wallace-Bott hypothesis as the principle of stress tensor inversion. The  
278 slip direction of a fault is assumed to coincide with the shear stress direction  
279 exerted by the tectonic stress in question. (a) In the physical space, observ-  
280 able fault parameters are represented by unit vectors  $\mathbf{v}$ ,  $\mathbf{b}$  and  $\mathbf{n}$ . A correct  
281 stress tensor gives shear stress vector  $\boldsymbol{\tau}$ , which is the projection of traction  
282 vector  $\mathbf{t}$  onto fault plane, in the direction of slip  $\mathbf{v}$ . (b) Schematic figure of  
283 deviatoric stress space. Wallace-Bott hypothesis is geometrically expressed  
284 as the constraint on stress tensor represented by  $\vec{\sigma}$  from a fault-slip datum.  
285 The fault parameters  $\vec{\epsilon}$  and  $\vec{\epsilon}'$  specify a half great circle called the Fry arc  
286 (bold line) on which  $\vec{\sigma}$  vector is required to lie.

287 *Figure 3*

288 Schematic figure illustrating how to calculate the direct solution of stress  
289 tensor inversion. When we have four fault-slip data, four  $\vec{\epsilon}'$  vectors are  
290 specified in the five-dimensional deviatoric stress space. The parallel condi-  
291 tions between fault-slip directions and shear stress vectors require  $\vec{\sigma}$  vector  
292 representing stress tensor to be perpendicular to all four  $\vec{\epsilon}'$  vectors. The an-  
293 alytical solution to this even-determined problem can be uniquely obtained  
294 as the direction of five-dimensional cross product of  $\vec{\epsilon}'$  vectors. Note that  
295 four  $\vec{\epsilon}'$  vectors must be linearly independent in the five-dimensional space,  
296 although this schematic figure looks as if they were two-dimensionally copla-  
297 nar owing to lack of dimension. The white circle spanned by them represents  
298 not a two-dimensional circle but a four-dimensional space.

299 *Figure 4*

300 An example of results of the test to examine the computational cost of  
301 FMI. (a) Artificial fault-slip data containing 50 faults of which half is acti-  
302 vated by stress A and the other half is activated by stress B. Tangent-lineation  
303 diagram (Twiss and Gefell, 1990) in lower-hemisphere and equal-area pro-  
304 jection. Arrows plotted at poles of fault planes indicate slip directions of  
305 footwall blocks. (b) Result of MIM. Paired stereograms show orientations of  
306  $\sigma_1$ - and  $\sigma_3$ -axes. Colours of symbols indicate stress ratio  $\Phi$ . In this figure  
307 300 stress tensors out of 60,000 grid points are plotted, which got more votes  
308 from fault subsets than the others. The assumed stresses A and B were cor-  
309 rectly detected. (c) Result of FMI in similar plot as (b). Note that there is  
310 no significant difference between results of MIM and FMI.



311 *Figure 5*

312 Comparison of calculation times of MIM and FMI. Horizontal axis is the  
313 number of faults analysed. (a) Analysis of geological faults. FMI works about  
314 ten times faster than MIM, although the calculation times of both methods  
315 increase rapidly with the number of data. (b) FMI is also faster in analysis  
316 of seismic focal mechanisms, although they require much longer time than  
317 geological faults because of unknown choice of nodal planes.

318 *Figure 6*

319 The result of analysis to test the effect of noise reduction. (a) Artificial  
320 100 fault-slip data assumed to be activated by a single stress with  $\Phi = 0.3$ .  
321 Open squares are principal stress axes plotted on lower-hemisphere and equal-  
322 area stereogram. Arrows show the slip directions of footwall blocks plotted  
323 at poles of fault planes (tangent-lineation diagram). (b) Result of MIM.  
324 (c) Result of FMI. (d) Result of FMI with noise reduction. See Fig. 4  
325 for explanation of plots.  $\Phi$  values show stress ratios of optimal solutions of  
326 which principal orientations are plotted as open squares. The accuracies of  
327 the optimal solutions were measured by  $\Theta$  values which are distances from the  
328 assumed stress.  $\bar{\Theta}$  is the dispersion of solutions obtained from fault subsets  
329 as a measure of precision. Stress tensors of which votes are more than 1.5%  
330 of their maximum are plotted. Note that higher accuracy and precision was  
331 achieved by noise reduction in FMI.

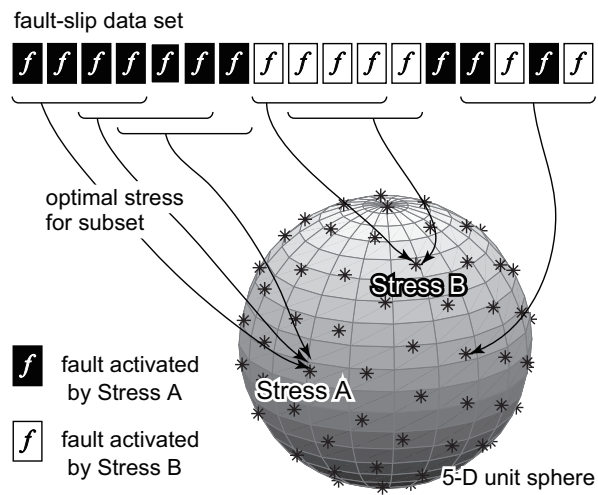


Figure 1: Sato.

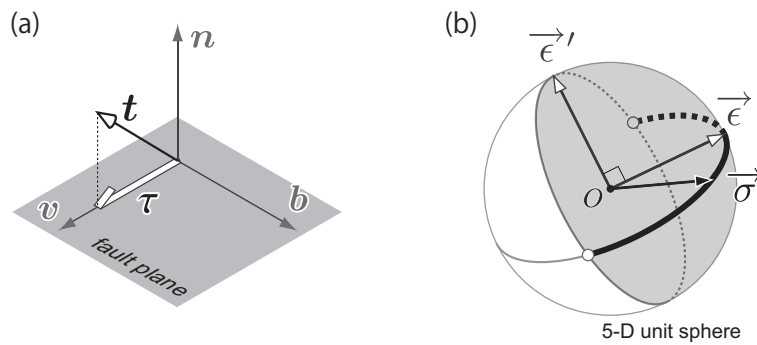


Figure 2: Sato.

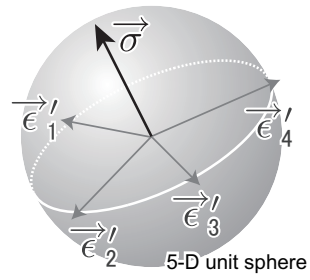


Figure 3: Sato.

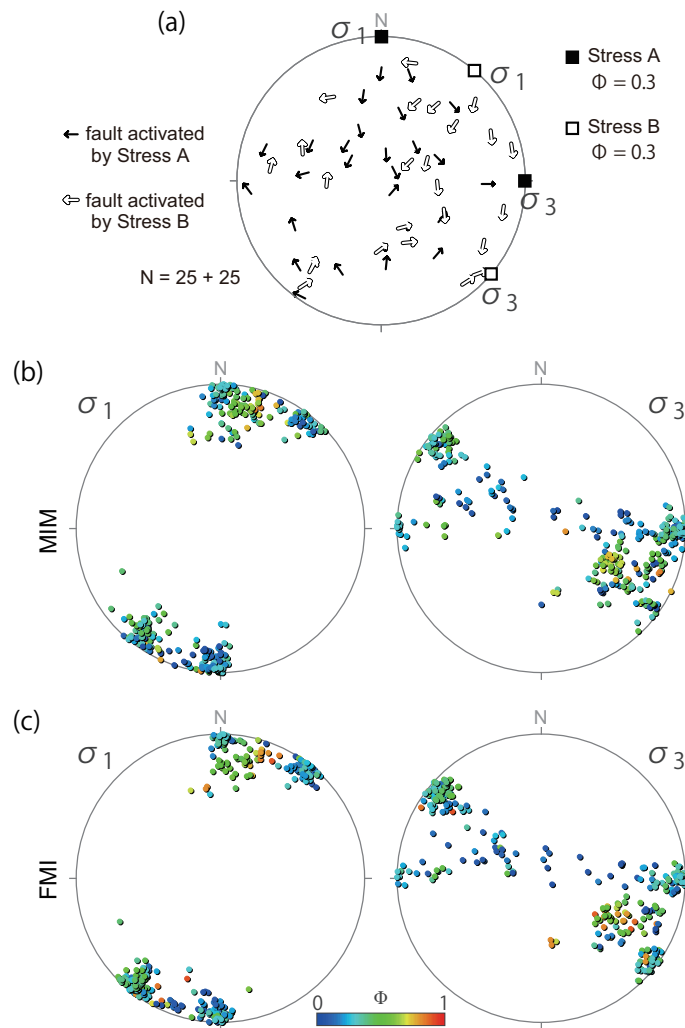


Figure 4: Sato.

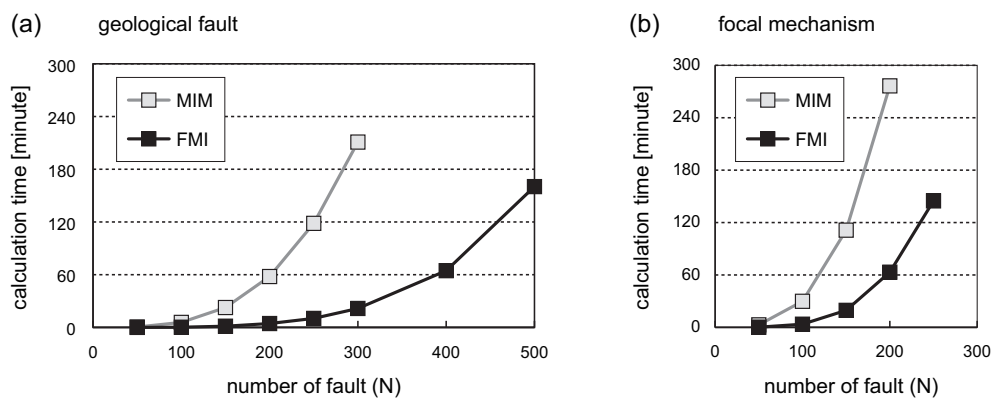


Figure 5: Sato.

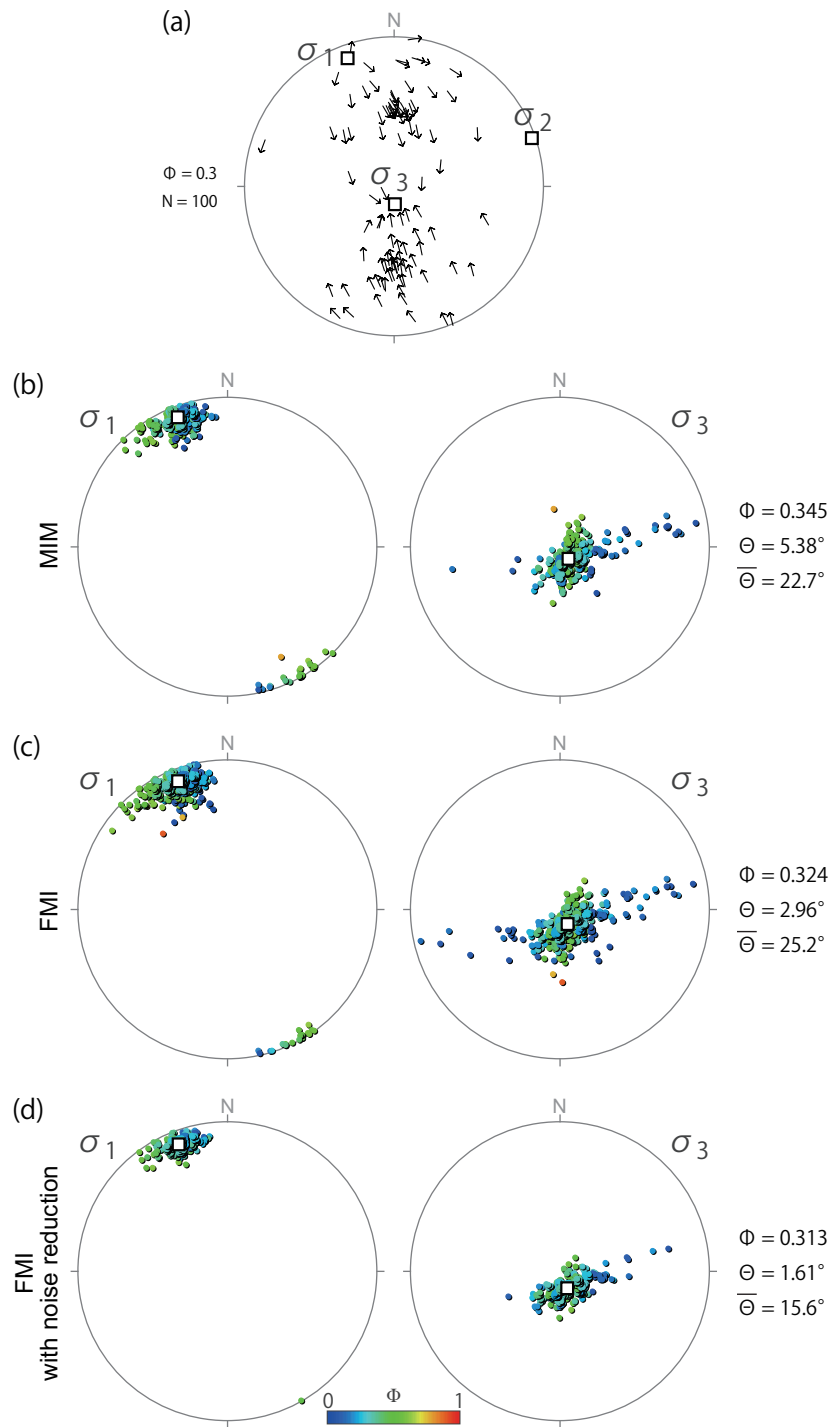


Figure 6: Sato.